

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AS, PT, SOPN, OREP

SUBJECT: TIMOR, CONGRESSMAN DERWINSKI PRESS CONFERENCE

AT HIS OWN INITIATIVE, CONGRESSMAN EDWARD J. DERWINSKI HELD A LONG, SOMETIMES HEATED AND FREQUENTLY EMOTIONAL PRESS CONFERENCE FRIDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 18, WITH 20 MEMBERS OF THE CANBERRA PRESS CORPS INCLUDING THREE NATIONAL TV NETWORKS, THREE RADIO NETWORKS, RADIO AUSTRALIA AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE MAJOR DAILIES. THE PRINCIPAL FOCUS OF THE SESSION WAS ON EAST TIMOR WITH THE CONGRESSMAN'S VIEW ON THE RECENT HEARING WITH JIM DUNN, THE USE OF AMERICAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TAKEOVER.

THE THRUST OF DERWINSKI'S REMARKS WERE THAT THERE HAD BEEN VIOLATIONS ON BOTH SIDES, AMERICAN ARMS HAD BEEN USED BUT THE EXTENT WAS NOT YET KNOWN, DUNN WAS NOT A CREDIBLE WITNESS, INDONESIAN ANNEXATION OF TIMOR WAS QTE PREDICTABLE, UNDERSTANDABLE AND JUSTIFIED FROM THE STANDPOINT OF INDONESIA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS, ENDQTE, AND THE INCORPORATION OF TIMOR WAS A REALITY THAT WOULD NOT CHANGE.

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DERWINSKI INTRODUCED THE TIMOR ISSUE AT THE ONSET OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE BY SAYING HE TOOK EXCEPTION TO A CIRCULAR LETTER TO ALL DELEGATATES AT THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY UNION MEETING IN CANBERRA ON THE GROUNDS IT WAS BIASED AND PRESENTED A ONE-SIDED APPROACH. HE BARELY GOT THROUGH THAT PORTION OF HIS INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BEFORE BEING BESIEGED WITH SPIRITED QUESTIONING FROM ALL SIDES. DERWINSKI TOOK GREAT

PAINS TO EXPLAIN HE WAS SPEAKING FROM A PERSONAL VIEW, BUT ON THE DUNN HEARING HE DID REPRESENT A MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS OF HIS SUBCOMMITTEE-THE ONE WHICH HEARD THE DUNN TESTIMONY. REPEATEDLY, IN THE FACE OF HEATED AND EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES FROM THE PRESS, HE PATIENTLY EXPLAINED DUNN, WHILE A SINCERE AND DEDICATED MAN, FAILED TO PROVIDE ANY SOLID EVIDENCE TO BACK UP THE ALLEGATIONS HE HAD MADE. THE CONGRESSMAN WAS CHALLENGED ON THE NUMBER OF DEAD AND/OR MISSING. DERWINSKI ALLOWED THAT PERHAPS AS MANY AS 50,000 COULD BE THE TOTAL, BUT EMPHATICALLY REJECTED THE 100,000 FIGURE CITED BY DUNN AS IMPOSSIBLE. HE ALSO POINTED OUT HIS FIGURE INCLUDED THOSE WHO HAD FLED TO THE INDONESIAN SIDE OF THE ISLAND, SOME OF WHOM HAD RETURNED AND WERE STILL UNCOUNTED, AND THOSE KILLED IN THE FACTIONAL FIGHTING BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF INDONESIAN REGULAR TROOPS.

DERWINSKI ADMITTED THERE WERE EXCESSES ON BOTH SIDES, AND FLATLY REJECTED THE INDONESIAN CLAIM OF VOLUNTEERS. REPEATEDLY PRESSED ON WHETHER INDONESIA WAS JUSTIFIED IN ITS ANNEXATION, DERWINSKI FIRMLY EXPLAINED HIS POSITION, THAT GIVEN THE BACKGROUND OF GESTAPU, THE MARXIST ORIENTATION OF FRETILIN AND THE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF TIMOR, THE INDONESIAN ACTION WAS PREDICTABLE FROM THE INDONESIAN POINT OF VIEW. HE CITED THE LACK OF INFRA-STRUCTURE, AND POTENTIAL VIABILITY OF EAST TIMOR AS AN INDEPENDENT STATE AS AN ADDED FACTOR. AT THE SAME TIME, HE DEPLORED THE NECESSITY FOR INDONESIA TO ACT, LISTING THE PRECIPITOUS WITHDRAWAL OF PORTUGAL AS A COLONIAL POWER AND THE STRATEGIC THREAT TO INDONESIA BY A MARXIST STATE, UNCLASSIFIED

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AS CAUSES.

UNSHAKEN BY THE HOSTILE QUESTIONING, DERWINSKI SAID THE FATE OF FURTHER CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON TIMOR DEPENDED UPON SEVERAL FACTORS, FOREMOST WAS THE NEED FOR POSSIBLE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION WHICH HINGED UPON THE DEGREE OF VIOLATION OF INDONESIA OF ITS AGREEMENT ON THE USE OF USE ARMS. THIS, HE SAID, WOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF FURTHER COMMITTEE DISCUSSION. HE ADDED THAT IF THERE WERE ANY ADDITIONAL WITNESSES OR FACTS, THE COMMITTEE WOULD PROBABLY LOOK INTO THEM, HOWEVER, HE ASSERTED THAT IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, US AID TO INDONESIA WOULD CONTINUE AT ABOUT THE CURRENT LEVEL.

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE INDIAN OCEAN, DERWINSKI STRONGLY FAVORED THE U.S. PRESENCE IN THE AREA AND TERMED DEVELOPMENT OF DIEGO GARCIA ESSENTIAL. HE SAID HE WOULD SUPPORT PRESIDENT CARTER'S INITIATIVE ON DEMILITARIZATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN, BUT WAS NOT SANGUINE ABOUT THE PROSPECTS. IN THE MEANTIME, HE FAVORED CONTINUED AMERICAN PRESENCE,

BUT NOT ON A MATCHING SHIP-FOR-SHIP BASIS, ADVOCATING
PERIODIC VISITS BY THE U.S. NAVY.

FOR JAKARTA: TO EXPEDITE COMPLETE TEXT OF PRESS
CONFERENCE, SENDING TAPE IN LIEU OF TRANSCRIPT. PERCIVAL

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